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Policies on Reproductive Health Care for Ethnic Minority People in Viet Nam



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PREFACE

In cooperation with the Government of Viet Nam, reproductive health care for ethnic minority groups is one of the key issues supported by the Seventh National Program (2006-2010) of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) within the context of the UN One Plan.

Fifty-four ethnic minority groups live in the upland and relatively remote and mountainous regions of Viet Nam, very often under harsh natural conditions and with limited opportunities for economic development. To address this situation, the Government has introduced a variety of policies to assist ethnic minority groups in catching up with their lowland compatriots.

The Government, Ministry of Health and relevant agencies have developed various intervention strategies to improve health care overall. However, delivery of reproductive health care poses a range of practical challenges. Compared to other regions in Viet Nam, ethnic minority people are exposed to a higher incidence of maternal, infant and child mortality. Abortion rate is also of great concern, suggesting further need to strengthen universal access to quality reproductive health services.

These crucial issues raise questions: how relevant, viable and sustainable are current policies? Is implementation of major policies carried out promptly? Is financial and managerial support provided in a consistent and timely manner at the commune level? Are challenges and setbacks that emerge during implementation relayed back to the central and higher level authorities for their consideration and follow up action? What are the outcomes and measureable results of various RH policies? What adjustments are needed to ensure ethnic minority people have access to high quality RH services?

Between July 2008 and August 2009, UNFPA provided technical and financial assistance to the Ministry of Health for the purpose of conducting a **“Review of Reproductive health Policies and implementation for Ethnic Minority People”**. The Institute of Population and Social Affairs (National Economics University) was commissioned to complete the research. This report presents an abbreviated version of the Review findings.

On behalf of UNFPA, I would like to thank the Institute of Population and Social Affairs (National Economics University) for their commitment and Dr. James Knowles and Dr. Nguyen Thi Thanh Huong for their technical assistance in completing the Review. Our appreciation also goes to UNFPA officers Dr. Duong Van Dat, Dr. Le Thanh Huyen, Ms. Tran Thi Thu Huong and other reproductive health team members, for their support and contribution to the review.

We hope that the findings of this report will be useful to policy makers and program managers at all levels, in developing and implementing more effective reproductive health policies for ethnic minority groups within the context of the 5-year Health Plan, Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2010 - 2015 and the Population and Reproductive Health Strategy for 2010 – 2020.

Bruce Campbell
Representative
United Nations Population Fund in Vietnam

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